

For centuries now, man has wrestled with the problem of divorce. Divorce is a scourge to any society, breaking up the home as God would have it and causing mental and financial ruin. Homes are divided, children live unstable lives, and evil feelings are the outcome of divorce. Many difficulties come to those who are divorced. It is no wonder that God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16).

Yet, even seeing the difficulties, man still divorces and does little to keep the home together. Divorce has become the easy way out for those who do not want to work at having a happy home. Selfishness abounds, and while man thinks he is winning, God is losing. From the beginning, God set up the home to remain together until death parted those who are married (Genesis 2:23,24; Matthew 19:1-6). It has long been shown that the strength of both our society and the church is found in the home.

In Matthew 19, Jesus is confronted by the Pharisees with what could be a very difficult question. It is certain that they believed they could trap Jesus with this question as the Bible teaches us they were “tempting him” (Matthew 19:3). Today, few would probably attempt to answer this question because of the emotions that are involved concerning divorce. Yet, Jesus answered the question skillfully using the Bible as his guide book.

The question that they asked Jesus was, “*Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?*” (Matthew 19:3). You can only imagine how they waited on his answer, hoping that they could show him to be false in his answer and prove that he was not the Messiah. But, rather than get caught in their trap, he answered them from the Biblical record going back to the beginning of marriage itself. There

is a great lesson in this for us. When dealing with any subject, including divorce, stay with what the Bible said, and do not make it an emotional issue. And certainly, do not twist the scriptures to try to make right a situation that is wrong.

Jesus starts his answer with “*Have ye not read?*” (Matthew 19:4), an appeal to God’s word on the subject. He shows them that God placed humans upon the Earth and made them male and female. When we go back to Genesis 1 and 2, we see this event take place. Genesis 2 gives more detail concerning this and helps us to understand that God made Adam and saw that it was not good for man to be alone, and created Eve as a helper suitable for Adam (Genesis 2:18ff). It should be noted that God made them male and female and joined male and female together in marriage. God did not bring marriage into being so two males or two females could marry one another.

By starting from the beginning, Jesus established that it was God who instituted marriage and sets the ground work for the rest of his argument. In Matthew 19:5, he brings to their remembrance that marriage was set up for the two who are married to leave father and mother and cleave to one another. They would become one flesh. God’s view of marriage is that the man and woman grow together and become one in thinking and direction. They truly would care for one another. Paul referred to this concept in Ephesians 5:29: “*For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church*”.

Next, in Matthew 19:6, Jesus teaches us how long the marriage is to last. Man is not to put it asunder. No person, whether in the marriage or outside the marriage, is to cause the breakdown

of the home. It is, and has always been, God’s intention that the marriage stay together until death ends the marriage (cf. Romans 7:1-4; 1 Corinthians 7:39).

The Pharisees cannot argue with what Jesus said. He has given them that which is found in God’s word. Only a fool would argue with what God had said! So they continue testing Jesus by asking him why Moses gave a writing of divorce, if it was not God’s desire that any one divorce (Matthew 19:7). Moses allowed them to put away their wives because they were hard hearted. Man would violate the marriage and God allowed them to put away their wives, but not for every cause (cf. Deuteronomy 24:1-4). Because of sin, man will create some situations in marriage that can be very difficult. One violation of the marriage would be such that God would allow the person to divorce. As the Pharisees asked this second question concerning Moses and the writing of divorcement, Jesus reminded them that this was not how it was from the beginning. Because of man’s sin, God would make an exception to the rule. (Matthew 19:8).

Matthew 19:9 is probably one of the most misused verses of scripture in the Bible. Just about anything and everything has been taught about this verse, and we have made it more difficult than it is because many do not like the teachings or the implications of this verse when it is understood correctly. What Jesus will do in Matthew 19:9 is correct their thinking on marriage and divorce. Because of the exceptive clause in this passage and in Matthew 5:32, we find that one who puts away their mate for that mate’s fornication may enter into another marriage with a person who is also eligible to be married. That being said, our subject deals with is it lawful to put away a woman for every

cause and Jesus addresses this here.

To understand this verse, let us remove the exceptive clause and see what the verse says. Jesus begins by letting them know this applies to every one (Whosoever). He then addresses the issue of divorce. If a person puts away their mate and marries another, they commit adultery. They have no right to enter another marriage and are now guilty of sexual immorality. Also, if a person marries the person that is put away, they also commit adultery. The general rule of divorce is "Don't do it. If you do, you cannot enter into another marriage". Keeping in mind that God intended marriage to stay together until death ended the marriage, it is not hard to understand that God does not want people to divorce and think they can just enter into another marriage until they get the one they want. God wants us to understand there are severe consequences to divorce. To this assessment agree both Mark 10:11,12 and Luke 16:18.

Now, going back to Matthew 19:9, let us put the exceptive clause back in. Jesus teaches us that if a person puts away his or her mate because the one being put away has committed fornication, then one can divorce and not violate God's law of marriage and divorce. It is God who put this exception in place and it is the only exception to God's law of divorce.

The disciples have been listening to this exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees and are troubled by this discussion. They have determined that this is a hard saying and it would be best never to marry (Matthew 19:10). Like so many today, it is easier to go to an extreme than face the teaching and its implications. Marriage is not that hard if two people love one another and want to please God. But, when man wants out of the marriage,

he wants to do so on his terms and not on God's terms. Man would say, "If you are going to make it that hard, then why marry?"

Jesus makes two statements related to this question. "...*save them to whom it is given*" (Matthew 19:11) and "*He that is able to receive it, let him receive it*" (Matthew 19:12). Jesus knows that this does not apply to everyone. For instance, there are those who will not enter marriage, either because they cannot or they choose not to. In verse 12, he talks about those who are eunuchs for various reasons, including those who choose to be for the kingdom of Heaven's sake. Paul would talk about those who would choose not to marry so they could more fully devote themselves to the things of God (1 Corinthians 7:32-35). But, Paul also recognized that not every person could do this (1 Corinthians 7:8,9), and that it is not a sin to marry (1 Corinthians 7:27,28). God also teaches us that marriage is honorable in all (Hebrews 13:4).

But to those who choose to enter into marriage, this is the rule. Marriage is for life. Do not tear it apart. Do not divorce.

Is it lawful to put away a woman for any cause? No. The only scriptural reason for divorce is for one to put away his or her mate because that mate has committed fornication. All other divorce is wrong.

This tract is condensed from a lesson presented at the
29th Annual Mid-West Lectures,
"They Shall Be Turned Unto Fables"
To hear or view the complete lesson go to
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**"They Shall Be Turned
Unto Fables"**

Is It Lawful To Put Away A Woman For Any Cause?

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*International Bible Studies
Tract Series*